

## Transcription: Charles Peck

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*Today is Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. This morning I'll be interviewing Dr. Charles Peck. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. My name if I didn't say it already is James Crabtree. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to join us today. It's an honor for us, and for our program.*

**Charles Peck:** Yes sir.

*Sir, I always start off with the first question, but I think it's an important one, is please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your background before you went into the military.*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I was born in Star, Texas. That's about 20 miles east of Goldthwaite I guess. In 1925, my dad bought a farm in San Saba County and had two miles in front on the Colorado River, 545 acres, and we didn't live there, but let's see, we were there in '25 and then they moved over into Mills County in 1930, and we lived there, three years there, and then finally about '34 we moved southwest of Goldthwaite, about three miles, and then in '36 he bought a ranch 9 miles northwest of Georgetown and we moved there. I finished high school at Georgetown.

*Georgetown High School.*

**Charles Peck:** Yes sir.

*Did you have any brothers and sisters?*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yes, I had four brothers and one sister.

*And you all grew up on a ranch.*

**Charles Peck:** Yes.

*I imagine that was probably a pretty busy life.*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, it was. It was pretty good. I enjoyed it. I was thinking about coming back to the ranch after the war, but one of my friends talked me into going to dental school and so that's what I did. I finished dental school in 1950.

*Where were you then, sir, when World War II started? Were you still in high school?*

**Charles Peck:** No, I was in college at Southwestern University there in Georgetown.

*Also in Georgetown, yes sir. Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day?*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yes, I remember. I was in the service by then and I was stationed at Chinook Field up at Grandpool, Illinois, and we were on an open post. I forgot the name of the city we were in, but all of a sudden the MP's were driving up and down the street hollering get back to base. And we got back to base and we had found out that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, and I didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was.

*Sure.*

**Charles Peck:** Things tightened up a little bit after we got in the war.

*So you had already gone into the service. What was it that had attracted to entering the military even before the war had started?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I was always interested in airplanes and I tried to get into the flying cadets before I entered the service, and I flunked something on the physical and so that knocked me back pretty bad, and so I decided well, I'll just go into the Air Force and go to Chinook Field at their airplane engine mechanic school and if I couldn't fly 'em, I'd work on 'em.

*So you had already graduated from college at Southwestern?*

**Charles Peck:** No, I just had two years.

*And so then you went into the Army Air Corps and did they put you through some sort of basic officer training or recruit training?*

**Charles Peck:** I had a little bit of hard luck. I went through the 12 or 13 weeks of basic training and they lost my records, and lost my records of all my shots, so the boys that I had joined up with, they went on to Chinook Field and I had to go through basic training and get all the shots again.

*Geez. They made you go through another 12 weeks, sir, or just the shots?*

**Charles Peck:** That's right.

*The whole 12 weeks?*

**Charles Peck:** All 12 weeks.

*That's pretty unbelievable that they would make you do that and also that you would do that, because I know that's not a lot of fun. But I guess you really were determined to be able to fly then.*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, well I wanted to learn to work on 'em, and so after I finished the airplane engine mechanic school, I was assigned down in Florida at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mapping Squadron at McDill Field. Well we had about four Lockheed Hudson's and we had a base down in South America that we were doing a lot of mapping down there and I never did get to go down there, but one day they loaded up one airplane and the commanding officer, Major James H.C. Houston, was flying and they were heading for South America. Well they didn't have that plane loaded properly, so they took off and got about 30 feet in the air and then they just nosed over and hit the ground and burst into flame, and the commanding officer and the first sergeant and everybody aboard was killed.

*Yeah, I know that's a big thing with the load masters and making sure that everything is strapped down and doesn't shift during flight, and especially during takeoff or landing.*

**Charles Peck:** After that they were more careful about loading.

*Yes sir. To back up a little bit, sir, what was it you think attracted you to aviation? Was it just something you were always interested in as a child?*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, I was always interested in it. I got to take a first ride in an airplane about 1933 or '34. There was a little three-engine plane landing there at Goldthwaite and they were giving rides I think for a dollar a piece and it would carry about six passengers, so I got out there and got my ride, and then about every hour they would have a drawing, and so I got my name drawn and I got two rides that day and I was really elated over that.

*How old do you think you were at that time?*

**Charles Peck:** About 15.

*So that had to have been a unique experience. A lot of people at that time hadn't flown before either.*

**Charles Peck:** Well that's the first time I had flown.

*Yes sir, and you liked it immediately I guess.*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah.

*So in the Army Air Corps, after you had to go through your basic training twice, which just sounds horrible, but you went through your basic training twice, was there ever any doubt that you'd get to work with airplanes? Was that something you had been guaranteed to do as your specialty?*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah.

*So when you finished your basic, and where was your basic training?*

**Charles Peck:** St. Louis.

*Yes sir, and then that's when they sent you to Chinook Field in Illinois?*

**Charles Peck:** Went from St. Louis to Jefferson barracks St. Louis, went to Chinook Field up out of Chicago a ways.

*Yes sir. What type of aircraft did they have you working on? I know you mentioned you got down to McDill.*

**Charles Peck:** Well, in school we had an old B-18. It was a Douglas twin engine bomber. Then we worked on an airplane that had an inline water-cooled engine, it was a P-36 I believe. But it was an ancient plane. It wasn't modern. But the planes we had down at McDill Field were more modern planes.

*I'm sure they were cutting edge, state of the art for the time. Did you enjoy being a mechanic? Was it something that came kind of easy to you?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I thought I was going to enjoy it, but they had an old master sergeant in charge of each airplane, and I don't think I ever picked up a wrench. All I got to do was wipe grease off of myself. So then they were wanting flying cadets again, so I applied again and this time I passed the physical and got sent up to the aviation cadet center up in Tennessee, and they were, you had a take a test to qualify either as a pilot or bombardier or navigator, and so my best friend, he qualified as a bombardier and I qualified as a pilot.

*That's great. So you had the background then of having been enlisted as a mechanic, so I'm sure that probably helped you to some extent at least in understanding things.*

**Charles Peck:** Yes it did.

*And you said it was in Tennessee. Was that at Millington?*

**Charles Peck:** Nashville I believe it was.

*Yes sir. So tell us, sir, what the training was like as a brand new pilot, what type of training you went through.*

**Charles Peck:** Well of course we had about 12 weeks of ground school, and we studied navigation and all that kind of stuff, and then I got sent up to I believe it was St. Louis, east St. Louis. I've forgotten the name of the field now, but we had BT-19's which was a low-wing monoplane with fixed gear, and a fairly good air-cooled engine in it, and I think that each one of those places lasted about three months.

*That's a lot of time then training before you were ever able to even really be out with the active forces I guess.*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah. Well we had three phases to go through. We had the primary and then we had the basic training. We had BT-13's which was a real good airplane. It had 450 horsepower engine but a fixed gear. I wanted twin engine, so I got to go to, man, I can't even remember the name of the base, but we had UC-78's which was a twin engine plane, and then we had an AT-9 which was a twin engine plane. The UC-78's were a little bit underpowered, but the AT-9 was a pretty hot airplane, but I didn't get to fly it too much, but I checked out in it and mastered it pretty well.

*What was the most challenging part of flight training? I guess from people I've talked to, certain things are easier for them than others, and everybody though at some point has something that's challenging to them. What did you find to be the most challenging part of flight training?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, old men, the instructor I guess. They were pretty hard-nosed and they come down on you pretty hard when you made a mistake, but I enjoyed it nonetheless because I was flying.

*Tell us, sir, about some of the other air cadets that were going through with you, kind of what their backgrounds were and how they did with their training. I'm sure there were some that washed out.*

**Charles Peck:** Well, there was one named Carlos Putnam. He was from Oklahoma and he was my kinsman but I didn't even know it until we had graduated. His dad and my mother were first cousins.

*That's pretty funny.*

**Charles Peck:** So the day we graduated, I think we had a little ceremony there, and my mother pinned my wings on my left pocket and went back to the barracks and Carlos Putnam was in there. He said Peck, you and your mother and dad are going home with us. So my mother had gone up to Oklahoma when she was a school girl and I think she graduated from high school there and stayed with some of her kinfolk Putnams.

*So you two were cousins then and didn't even know it.*

**Charles Peck:** That's right.

*I'm sure that had to have been a great day when you got your wings.*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yes it was. I really thought I was something then.

*Yes sir, and how old were you at that time?*

**Charles Peck:** That was in 1943, so I was 22 years old.

*So pretty young, 22, and just gotten your wings as a pilot. Then at that point did you know where you were going to be going and what you were going to be flying?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I wanted to go to B-17 transition school and check out as a first pilot but I had made a pretty bad mistake. The last night we were flying, we were flying in night formation, and we'd be three planes in a formation, and so we would come in and the left plane would peel off and then the lead plane would peel off and then the plane on the right wing would peel off and come in for a landing. Well I came in a little bit too close to the plane in front of me and so I was getting ready to land and the tower says third plane in landing pull up and go around. Well, we were flying a UC-78 and it was night and they don't fly too good with the wheels down, so I pulled the wheels up and there was another cadet in the plane with me. We always flew pilot and copilot and then we would switch over. But anyway that night I was pilot and William Pettigo was my copilot, and so I came around and hit the base leg and started in and he called the tower and says we was down in locks and he didn't know that I had pulled them up, and I had forgotten about it completely, and boy I had a good approach there and I said man, I'm gonna grease this thing in this time. About that time I remembered that I had pulled the wheels up and I hit the throttle and the plane belly hit the concrete about the same time. Boy, old Rick Farrow, the captain, he called us in and chewed us out pretty good, and said you're gonna have to have six hours walking on the parade ground with a parachute on. So I got my six hours in and then they were sending us out. I applied for B-17 transition school but they sent me to an overseas training unit as a copilot on a B-17, and I went up in Washington and was gonna train there, but we weren't there but about three or four days and then they took us down to Kearney, Nebraska, and that's where I met my crew. They took me out there and put me in this B-17 and then Roy Greisbach had trained as a copilot and they were fixin' to go overseas, and his pilot went AWOL.

*Geez, that's horrible.*

**Charles Peck:** So they asked him what he wanted to do, and he said well, he would like to be the first pilot and get a copilot and go through the training again. So they came out and got him and told him, says well you got to go fly now. He said I can't fly now, I don't have a copilot. They said yes you can, he's going right in the airplane. And so they came in and I met the pilot and all the crew members and then we started training there and we trained there about three months.

*And that was in Nebraska?*

**Charles Peck:** Yes, Kearney, Nebraska. And I have never been treated so nice by the civilians.

*That's great.*

**Charles Peck:** Later on, after I come to Austin and had a dental practice, Texas was playing Nebraska, women's basketball, and so I went up there and met them in the gym and told them what a good time I had had up at Kearney, Nebraska.

*Oh that's great. Sir, tell us a little bit about the memories of your crew, where they were from and some of their backgrounds.*

**Charles Peck:** Well, Greisbach was from Wisconsin and Miskonsel was also from Wisconsin, and John Hartford, the radio operator, I think he was from somewhere up East, and the tail gunner was from New York, and one of the waist gunners was from New York, and one of the other waist gunner was from, I forgot where he was from. I think he was from the Western states. And then John Simonson, the navigator, was from California, and John Pilan, the bombardier, was from South Carolina.

*I imagine, sir, all these men were very young, right?*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah, early 20's. I think Hartford was maybe in his late teens, about 19.

*Wow, yeah, very young. And did the crew get along pretty well together?*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah, we were real congenial.

*So during that three months, you trained together the whole time.*

**Charles Peck:** Yes.

*So by the time you got actually deployed into a theater of action, I'm sure you felt like you all knew each other pretty well and felt like you were well trained.*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, well I had about, I don't remember, several weeks that I didn't fly after we finished the training and went to Bassingbourn, England, to the 91<sup>st</sup> Group. And oh, incidentally the 91<sup>st</sup> Group was training at McDill Field when I was down there with the third mapping squadron, and suddenly one day we looked up and all the B-17's were gone, and they had gone out to somewhere in Washington, Mosey's Lake I believe, Washington. And I didn't realize that the 91<sup>st</sup> Group was a B-17 group and I didn't realize that they were at McDill Field at the same

time I was when I got to England. But the commanding officer of the 91<sup>st</sup> Group was a West Pointer by the name of Carl Putnam, and he was kin to me. I didn't realize it until he called me in one day and said I understand we're kinfolks. I said yes sir. And he said well if I can ever do anything for you, just let me know. Well I don't think I had another word with him or at the time I was there.

*That's great. So sir, tell us a little bit if you would about the B-17, too. I know it's such a famous aircraft.*

**Charles Peck:** Well, it was a lovely plane to fly. It was easy to fly and it was very sensitive on the controls, and when you're flying in formation, you've got to be on the alert all the time. If you make a turn to the left and you're on the right wing, well you've got to speed up a little bit to keep up, and then if you make a turn to the right, you're inside, so then you have to slow down a little bit. You have to constantly be making corrections. The throttle quadrant on the B-17 had four levers, one for each engine, and the bar in the middle controlled all four engines, and then you had the extension of the first number one engine and number four engine above. So that's what you used when you were flying in formation because you could make your small correction with two engines, and you didn't want to over-correct or you'd overshoot, or you didn't want to under-correct or you'd fall behind. I don't know what mission it was, but we were on the wing of a lead plane, and Major McBarton was leading it, and Greisbach and I didn't do too hot a job of flying that day, and so when we met the next day after he got through going over the ocean, he said Greisbach and Peck, that was piss poor out there yesterday. He said you all didn't give a wham and a chance flying back there behind you. Well, the next time we got on his wing when he was leading, I mean we kept that thing right in there where we was supposed to be, and I thought about asking him, well how was that flying, Major Mack? But I knew all he would do is jump down my throat and say that's the way it's supposed to be done! So I didn't wreck the subject with him.

*During this time, sir, when you were in England, were you able to have pretty good contact with your family back home in terms of sending letters and that sort of thing?*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, sending letters, we didn't have to put postage on our letters back in the war. I don't know if they still have that for the service people or not.

*That's right, it's still that way, sir, you just write "free" in the corner and as long as you have an FPO or APO address, it'll get anywhere in the U.S. for free. You said you had four brothers and a sister, right?*

**Charles Peck:** Mm-hmm.

*Were any of them in the service during this time, too?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, my brother just older than me was in the service. He went to aviation cadet school but he flunked out of the flying, and so then he became a navigator and he flew on B-25's out of China. Then my brother just younger than me, I kept telling him, I said George, you'd better join the Army Air Force or you're going to get drafted into the infantry. Well, he was going to school at Southwestern there, in Georgetown, and he didn't, he waited and they called him up and they put him in the infantry. He had some pretty wild hair tales to tell about. He was in that Battle of the Bulge, and he said he spent 9 days and nights in one foxhole, and when they turned it around and got going the other direction again, well he got his feet frozen,

and they had him on a thing to carry him. A lieutenant came along, what's the matter with that man? They said his feet are frozen. Get him over there and let him walk. And so when he got away, they get him off of there and let him off, but as soon as that lieutenant got away, they put him back on the stretcher.

*Sure, yeah. So during this time, did you kind of know where your brothers were in terms of letters? Did you parents keep you updated on where they were and what they were doing?*

**Charles Peck:** Yes. My brother got a pretty good write-up one time early in the war. They went down to bomb someplace that the Japanese had taken over, and so they got lost on the way back, and they were getting ready to bail out, and my brother recognized some terrain there and so they made it on back to their base all right.

*Wow, yeah, I definitely would see how he would get an award for that. How did your parents cope with having you and two of your brothers in the war? Did it worry them a lot?*

**Charles Peck:** Well I don't know, they didn't seem to, of course my dad, he never did worry about anything, but my mother, I imagine she was a little bit concerned, but only trouble any of us really had was Gerald getting his feet frozen. Well once we were on a mission and when you get on, you start the initial point and it usually takes about 30 seconds to get to the target, and we got on this initial point and we were flying in formation of course, and I looked way up ahead there and saw an explosion of about six anti-aircraft shells, and each one of them put out a lot of black smoke, and then in about 10 seconds, of course we traveled a little further towards it, and I saw another one right, well it was a little ways from us, and boy, I thought this next one's gonna get us, because it was right at our altitude. Well, about 15 more seconds, six anti-aircraft shells exploded but they were off to our right just a little bit, but they blew out the plexiglass in the nose of the B-17.

*That's pretty close.*

**Charles Peck:** And all the black smoke, cordite smell came into the cabin, and so the airplane didn't really, the bombs in the lead plane did, so Greisbach got on the horn and told Pilen, release the bombs, release the bombs, and he didn't do it, so then Greisbach had to pull the switch over there by him that released the bombs, so I imagine ours didn't fall on the target very good. So then I went down, he couldn't get either the navigator or the bombardier to speak, and so I plugged in a walk around oxygen bottle and went down to see how they were and they were OK. Simonson was sitting behind the bombardier, and he got a slug in his shoulder but it wasn't bad, and Pilen didn't get a hit, and so they were OK, so I went back up to the cockpit and got back in the saddle.

*I'm sure on all those missions, because I know it's pretty well recorded and documented in history, a lot of those bombing missions were very dangerous and I'm sure you had to have known the gravity of what you were flying into in situations like that. Did you think about that sort of thing or was it something best not to?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I always felt that I'd make it through. I don't know why. But when I first got over there, 25 missions and then you can go home, and then pretty soon the pursuit fighter planes got more plentiful and they had wing tanks that they could go with us all the way to the target, and so then they changed it to 30 missions. So I got to come home after 30 missions.



*Wow, that's excellent, yes sir. And was it your same crew for all 30 of those?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I flew one crew, I thought I flew with him two times, Frank Turk, but the records say I flew only once, but I think I flew two times. They always had a pilot in the tail gunner position on the lead plane so he could tell the guy leading how the formation was coming on, and I flew tail gunner on one mission.

*What was that experience like?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, it was pretty good. We were going to Berlin and we were in the low squadron, or the lead squadron, and I wasn't flying with my crew on that one. I was flying with a guy by the name of Laflontin. He was from Michigan, and we were getting pretty close to Berlin and he called the bombardier up and says Jamie, how is Hitler going to explain this to the German people? I was scanning up ahead and I looked up there and looked like a swarm of mosquitoes, and I said I imagine he's going to have a pretty good explanation. So they hit us and hit the high squadron, and I saw a boy bailing out of the waist window of the B-17. He pulled his rip cord almost immediately, and it blossomed out in a big white umbrella, and then just like that it was gone by fire. I guess it was on fire. And he fell kicking his legs and had about a three- or four-minute fall to the ground before he met his doom.

*I can't imagine being in a situation like that. It's got to have been difficult, especially on those missions when you're coming up against all the enemy fire and enemy aircraft.*

**Charles Peck:** Well on January the 11<sup>th</sup>, we went to a city called Oosserschlaben. I thought they were an ME109 factory, but I'd been reading something lately said that they were making FOK Wolf 190's there, and we got shot up pretty good that day, and I don't remember exactly what position we were in the group, but there was a plane over the right of us and I saw an ME109 coming in, and of course everybody was firing at him, and I guess that they had killed him because he hit that B-17 right at the number two engine and it broke in two at the trailing edge of the wing and the ball turret fell out with the guy in it, and there was a huge explosion. I guess both gas tanks blew at the same time. The plane just went off. Of course we pulled away from it because it didn't stop completely but it sure slowed down and the plane went down with the pilot and copilot and flight engineer and bombardier and navigator in it, and the tail end of it just kept on flying straight and level, so the two waist gunners and the tail gunner may have gotten out, but I never did see people jump out of it because we pulled away from it pretty quick.

*When you would return from a mission like that where there had been casualties, would people talk about those you'd lost, or was it just something you'd try to put out of your mind?*

**Charles Peck:** Well we talked about it. We had four squadrons and we didn't know too many people in any of the other squadrons, but we'd talk about it.

*You said you did 30 missions, right sir?*

**Charles Peck:** Yes sir.

*When you went up for that one, I guess you would have known, I guess you were keeping track of how many you'd been on?*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah.

*When you went for that 30<sup>th</sup> and final mission, what was that like?*

**Charles Peck:** It wasn't too bad. We just had flack. I don't think we had any fighters to take us.

*You weren't superstitious then or worried that hey, this is my last mission, I'm about to get to go home, and worry something wrong would happen?*

**Charles Peck:** No, I just thought I was going to make it. Greisbach, the pilot, let me sit in the left seat on the last mission. Well I guess he was always flying it strictly by what the air told him, but it seemed to me that he would pull it off of the ground too soon and of course I had pull up the landing gear and flaps. We'd take off with half or full flaps, and I'd milk the flaps up or move it a little bit and then a little bit more, and then finally get it all the way up, and by then we would be up to 120 mph, something like that. But anyway, when I flew with Frank Turk, he left that thing on the ground until it got way up there and it would just fly itself off of the ground and it didn't seem like we were hanging on the propellers like we were when Greisbach took it up, every time he'd take it off. So when he put me in the left seat, I was going to do like Turk did and get the speed up better, and so I went and got up about 90 or a little more, I just left it on the ground, you know, and he said Charlie, get it off the ground, you're going to blow out a tire! So I pulled it off but we didn't seem like we were hanging on the props like we were when he was controlling it.

*That's great. So what was it like then when you landed from your 30<sup>th</sup> mission? Was there any extra celebration or elation about the fact that you had now done 30 and had a chance to go home?*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, we didn't do too much celebrating on that, but we were just glad that we had got it, and of course my crew, I flew three or four missions that they didn't fly, so I finished my missions before they did.

*And at that point, how long was it before they sent you back home?*

**Charles Peck:** Well I think it was about three or four weeks.

*And tell us, sir, what that was like getting back home and seeing your family again after having been over flying those missions.*

**Charles Peck:** Oh, it was great. My dad still, or my family still lived on the ranch out there and he had bought an initial 1,000 acres in 1936. Then he just wanted the land next to him when it become available, so he had about 3,000 acres paid for when the war was over.

*All out there in the Georgetown area.*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah.

*Which I guess today is probably filled with a lot of homes and businesses.*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah, they were putting homes on that place I guess in the 50s and 60s.

*I'm sure in your lifetime you've really seen Georgetown and all of Williamson County really boom and grow.*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah.

*So when you got back then, I guess you weren't completely discharged yet out of the Army Air Corps were you?*

**Charles Peck:** No, I was sent to Bryan Air Force Base to instrument school to teach instrument flying, and so I went through the course on instrument flying and I was pretty good at it, and so the colonel took a ride with me after I'd finished the course and I had applied to be an instructor there. So I had good luck, the air was smooth as glass the day I took my ride with the colonel, and he asked me why I wanted to be an instructor there, and I told him, I said well, I think I can learn something here that would justify my wanting to stay in the Army after the war. And so they took me on as an instructor.

*And that was at Bryan Air Base?*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, Bryan Army Air Base.

*Where is that located?*

**Charles Peck:** It's pretty close to College Station.

*Yes sir, so you were back home in Texas then, and got to serve as an instructor. And were you there, was that where you were when the war ended?*

**Charles Peck:** No, I didn't like instructing too much after I'd been in it for a while, and so they, since I had been through airplane engine mechanic school, they wanted me to learn to be a flight engineer on a B-29, and so I was stationed after I left instructing at Bryan, I went to Denver, Colorado. I didn't like that either. I wished I was back there instructing instrument flying.

*Where were you then when the war finally ended? I'm sure by this time it was getting close to being over.*

**Charles Peck:** Well they had a B-29 transition school at Randolph Field.

*Down in San Antonio.*

**Charles Peck:** That's where I was. I was instructing in the ground school there.

*Do you remember what the day was like when you learned that the war was finally over?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I couldn't believe it, but I sure was happy.

*Yes sir. And then at that point, you mentioned you had thought about staying in, were you able to stay in or did they force you out?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, see I had a temporary commission and I forget what they called it, but anyway you would stay in for two years and then you would be reevaluated, and they either give

you a permanent commission or they'd give you master sergeant, and I couldn't bend an elbow too well in the officer's club, and I was afraid that if I spent two years in there and then they wouldn't give me a commission, so I figured I'd be two years behind something or other. So one of my friends from Georgetown was in dental school going through on the Navy program, and he told me I ought to get out and go to dental school, so that's what I did.

*And you did that just as a civilian, not through the Navy?*

**Charles Peck:** No, I was a civilian.

*So your friend pretty much talked you into what became your future life's work I guess. And I guess you were happy that he did.*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, I practiced, when I was a senior, I went back in the Air Force. The Army and Navy were needing doctors and dentists, and they had what they called a senior dental program and give you a commission as a second lieutenant and paying allowances of second lieutenant during your senior year, and then you agree to serve for two years. So I got stationed up at Carswell Air Force Base at Fort Worth, and I thought I'd have two nice years there to practice dentistry. I didn't feel like going out and opening up a practice right away after I graduated, so I thought I'd get two years' experience in the Air Force and then be better able to start a civilian practice. The week I got to Carswell, the Korean War started, and so, let's see, I went there in the middle of 1950. Well, in 1951 they sent me to Okinawa.

*So they activated you or sent you there because of the war?*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, because of the war. And that's where I was when the war was over, and I got back and got out about the June the 12<sup>th</sup>, 1952, and there was a fellow there in Austin that had a practice and he had gone through dental school during the war on the Navy program, and so they started calling some of those guys back in. Well, he made a deal with me to let me take over his practice, so I had a full practice to start off with.

*That's great, that was an advantage for you then.*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah, it was.

*And so then at that point you did a couple of years in the Air Force at Carswell and then you were out completely, discharged completely at that point?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I did six months at Carswell and then got to go to Okinawa, and so that's where I, well they first said that they were going to hold us over there and make us serve until the Korean War was over, but they didn't. They let us out when our time came.

*When you got out, did you stay in the Reserves or were you just completely out altogether?*

**Charles Peck:** When I got out, I just went into Dr. Pfluger's practice and started out with a full load of patients.

*Yes sir, in Austin.*

**Charles Peck:** Yes.

*That's great. And were you married by this time?*

**Charles Peck:** Yes, I married between my junior and senior year.

*So you were married the whole time you were serving in the Army Air Corps as well?*

**Charles Peck:** Well no, just the two years that I served after dental school.

*OK, at dental school, OK, understood. And then did you keep in contact with any of the men you had served with, some of the pilots and crew?*

**Charles Peck:** Well I kept in contact with Greisbach. He and I were pretty close, and he passed away about two weeks ago. He was about 95 years old, and I'm 92 now.

*Yes sir. Did your unit ever have any reunions and things of that sort?*

**Charles Peck:** Oh yeah, we went to Seattle, Washington, the first reunion I went to. I went to about four or five of them. They had one in Houston and they had one in Washington, DC, and I can't remember where the other one was, but there would always be a bunch of guys there. They'd get fewer each year though.

*Yes sir. You sound like you're doing very excellent. It's an honor to be able to talk to you because there's a lot like you mentioned, a lot of World War II veterans that aren't around today or if they are, unfortunately they don't have their memories that they used to. Sir, I was going to ask you, too, when was the last time you had a chance to see a B-17 or fly in one? Have you been to any of those air shows and seen 'em up close?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I haven't been in a B-17 since I left England. They had one over at Georgetown a few years ago and I was planning on flying in it. It would cost me about \$400. But as we were driving up to the airport it was taking off, and I got there and realized that that was the last flight they were going to have of the day. So I didn't get to fly in it.

*That's too bad. I know there's a lot of those groups out there and we need to try and see if we can put you in touch with one of them because it sounds like you would definitely enjoy it and you definitely still remember it.*

**Charles Peck:** Yeah.

*I was going to ask you, too, sir, I know that Mr. Meyer is the one who had recommended you and he said that I guess you've been his dentist for a number of years, is that right?*

**Charles Peck:** 53, here in Austin.

*Yes sir, that's excellent. I really appreciate him putting us in touch with you today.*

**Charles Peck:** Well I appreciate it, too, I've enjoyed this.

*Yes sir, and what we'll do, in about a week or two, is we'll send you copies of this interview on CD's.*

**Charles Peck:** Well thank you.

*So you can give them to friends or family or whomever. And we're also going to include a commemorative binder. It's going to have a nice letter and certificate in there signed by Commissioner Patterson, and that's just a very small way of everyone here at the General Land Office thanking you for your service to our nation.*

**Charles Peck:** Well thank you for talking to me.

*Well it's our honor, and sir, one last thing, we're saving these stories, too, for posterity, and we have archives here that go back to the 1700s. We have the land grant that David Crockett's widow received after he was killed at The Alamo, and we have the Registro that Stephen F. Austin kept of all the settlers that first came to Texas, and with that in mind, is there anything you'd want to say to someone listening to this interview years and decades and maybe even 100 years from now?*

**Charles Peck:** Well, I don't know, I can't say that I enjoyed my combat mission, but I was glad to do it, and I have certainly enjoyed talking to you.

*Yes sir, well thank you. Again sir, it's our honor and to be able to hear your stories about what you did over there in Europe and the B-17. I have a pretty good visual picture in my mind and I'm sure everybody else that listens to this interview years to come I think will have that same picture in their head, too, and so I definitely appreciate it, sir, and like I said, we'll be sending you all this in a few weeks, and you've got my number as well, so feel free to call me at any point if there's anything we can do.*

**Charles Peck:** OK, I sure thank you.

*Yes sir. Well take care and we'll talk to you soon.*

*[End of recording]*